

ductor John Logan's beautiful arrangements.

FIONA SHEPHERD

OPERA

La Traviata

Theatre Royal, Glasgow



David McVicar's production of Verdi's classic weepie has travelled far and wide to great acclaim since its unveiling by Scottish Opera back in 2008 – and it's not hard to see why.

It's a sumptuous show, bringing together the opulence and debauchery of belle époque Paris, lit splendidly

with Caravaggio-like expressiveness. It's alive with telling detail: Violetta's maid Annina slumbering dog-like on a mattress at the foot of her mistress's sickbed, or the wonderfully convincing way McVicar has with crowd scenes.

It bristles with compelling storytelling, which shifts with cinema-style mastery from big setpieces – McVicar's choreographed bullfight is a masterpiece of sexual symbolism – to intimate close-ups on his leading players, who are an interesting pair, in Marie Lambert's eloquent revival.

Gulnara Shafigullina as tragic heroine Violetta seems more at home in Verdi's slow-

er music, where she caresses each note with exquisite care, than in the showy coloratura of Act I, but she charts her character's descent from carefree concubine to doomed lover compellingly.

Peter Gijbetsen as her lover Germont travels in the opposite direction: his Act I drinking song is touchingly naive, and he grows in passion and vocal richness as the evening progresses.

It's a hugely involving production that propels you along with sheer emotion, and the Scottish Opera Orchestra is on broad and resonant form under conductor David Parry.

DAVID KETTLE



↑ La Traviata – opulence and debauchery of belle époque Paris